

road for about 4 km before stopping off to visit the first *goth* or livestock camp. There we saw a pregnant cow with both forelimbs sprained or broken, caused by the takin's attempted mating. She was unable even to stand.

Climbing up towards the temporary shed of the second *goth*, we were alerted by shouts behind us. The takin against the skyline less than 100 m away was slowly and unhurriedly lumbering down towards us. Due to the earlier encounter, our staff was in favour of running away when the animal reached a close 30 m, separated from us only by a small stream. The takin, however, walked down its daily route towards the *goth* and its indignant owner standing outside waving his arms. The animal stood watching him for a few moments before crossing the stream to our side and moving away further downwards.

Nothing seemed to really disturb the animal and it was unnatural to see that the takin had no fear at all of man. Two days later, on August 7, 1999, the takin gored to death the shepherd of the third *goth*. His grandson, who escaped, ran to inform the checkpost police and our staff. They returned to see the body and shreds of clothing in the surrounding rhododendron bushes. The grandson informed us that the old man had been poaching monal and blood pheasants in the sanctuary and harassing the takin, which had attached itself to his flock of sheep. That day they had suddenly encountered the animal, only to be charged by it, and being the younger of the two, the grandson had managed to run away.

This is the first time that the old reports could be verified and with photographic proof. The takin, which is protected in India under

Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972, as amended up to 1993, does occur in Sikkim. As of now, all the three goat-antelopes in India, i.e. the goral, serow and takin can be said to be found in Sikkim.

Perhaps separated from its herd, this is the same solitary takin isolated on this side of the Chola Range that has been sighted over the years. In fact, the forests ran almost contiguous to north Sikkim along the entire flank of the famed Chumbi Valley (now in Tibet) starting from the Chola range which forms the eastern boundary of Sikkim. This is also the route used by the tiger *Panthera tigris* to travel up to Lachung and Yumthang in north Sikkim up to five decades ago and as recently as November 29, 1998, when an adult male tiger's pugmarks were lifted from the same Lagyap Reserve Forest above Gangtok by Mr. C. Lachungpa. Hence, this sighting of the takin in Sikkim proves a definite westward extension of its range, adding yet another endangered species to the already threatened faunal diversity of Sikkim.

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July 13, 1999 USHA GANGULI-LACHUNGPA
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3. FIRST RECORD OF OCCURRENCE OF ALBINO CRESTLESS HIMALAYAN PORCUPINE *HYSTRIX BRACHYURA* LINNAEUS, 1758 (RODENTIA : HYSTRICIDAE) IN INDIA

While examining the skins of porcupines 1792; crestless Himalayan porcupine *Hystrix*
 [Indian crested porcupine *Hystrix indica* Kerr, *brachyura* Linnaeus, 1758; brush-tailed

porcupine *Atherurus macrourus* (Linnaeus 1758)] present in the National Zoological Collection of the Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta, we came across an albino specimen of the crestless Himalayan porcupine *Hystrix brachyura* collected from Manipur, India. The literature has no record of albinism in *Hystrix brachyura* in India.

All measurements, external and cranial, are in millimetres.

Material examined: INDIA: Manipur: Imphal district: 1 ♀ subadult: 28 km north of Imphal on Dimapur Road, 29.xi.1945, coll. M.L. Roonwal. Rolled skin, Regn No. 11349, Mammal and Osteology Section, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta.

Measurements: Female. Subadult. External: head and body 555.0, tail 120.0, hindfoot 85.0, ear 37.0, Cranial: occipitonasal 119.0, nasal 66.2, palatal length 55.0, length of

bulia 17.2, zygomatic width 64.3, diastemma 32.0, length of mandible 75.5.

Diagnostic Character: Absence of crest of bristles on the crown, tail not brush-like. The specimen is albino i.e. without any pigmentation.

Distribution: INDIA: Sikkim, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur (Roonwal 1950). Nepal, Bangladesh, central and southern China, Myanmar, Thailand, Indochina, Malaya, Sumatra, Borneo, Singapore, Penang and Hainan Is. (Corbet and Hill 1992, Wilson and Reeder 1993).

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4. FIRST RECORD OF GANGETIC RIVER DOLPHIN, *PLATANISTA GANGETICA*. AT POBITORA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, ASSAM

The Gangetic river dolphin, *Platanista gangetica*, locally known as *sihu*, is a native of the Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems. On August 8, 1998, while on inspection duty, I sighted a juvenile Gangetic dolphin at Garanga beel on the southwest boundary of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary. This rare and endangered animal was observed plunging up and down in the water for about an hour, maneuvering in an area of around 100 sq. m. The dolphin was grey and approximately 90-100 cm long.

The dolphin was sighted about 2-3 km away from River Brahmaputra and hardly 220 m from River Kolong, a tributary of Brahmaputra. During the sighting period, the Sanctuary was submerged

in flood waters, up to 3.5-9.5 m from normal ground level. The flood water remains in the Sanctuary for almost three months i.e. from June to August.

The dolphin was last sighted further downstream on August 17, 1998. After observing the single animal for almost 10 days, it was concluded that the Gangetic dolphin occasionally migrates to high flood areas during the monsoon.

This is the first record of dolphin in the beels of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

April 28, 1999 MRIGEN BARUA
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